



### *Minutes*

**Agenda item:** Meeting with UNTZ staff members

**Presenter:** Louise Sperl, Jasmina Alihodžić

**Discussion:**

1. It could also be seen from the results as well as discussion (administrative staff) that there are no official data at the UNTZ concerning the status and number of students from underrepresented groups. It has been emphasized that the only data UNTZ staff actually acquire in relation to students from underrepresented groups is connected to the enrollment procedure (obligation to fill in the semester paper).
2. There was a question whether certain group of students which is qualified as underrepresented could be in advantage in relation to other groups of students (example of students who lost one of their parents during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and got a financial support accordingly).
3. It was evident from the discussion that there was no strategy in relation to the process of INCLUSION at the UNTZ.
4. There is no financial support for students of either category. There are no scholarships given by UNTZ. On the other side, there are scholarships given to students mostly by Ministries of Tuzla Canton, and inputs that determine the acquisition of the funds relate mostly, but not exclusively to grades, affiliation to the category of students whose parent got killed in combat in BH war, etc.
5. In relation to students with special needs (audio or visual impairments, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or some other physical or psychical impairment) there are no specially adapted forms of exams or tests systematically arranged in order to facilitate the educational process for these categories of students. Each professor seems to have individual approach to the problem.
6. It is stressed that UNTZ has already established the Center for the Support to Students with Special Needs.
7. There was a question:” How this INCLUSION project could contribute to the development of UNTZ”?

**Conclusions:**

1. It has been concluded that it is very important to have updated information concerning students from underrepresented groups. The information acquired from the enrollment procedure is insufficient.
2. The attendees concluded that it was very important to put all questions in certain context (i.e. understanding of certain UG/categories might not be the same in Bosnia and Armenia). Ms. Sperl mentioned the system of quotas existing in Kosovo and wondered if the similar method of categorization existed in Bosnia.
3. In relation to the future strategy, the participants concluded that there was a need for a legislative intervention which would reflect life-long learning, IT-learning and accommodation. Special method or procedure (enacted by the Law) is also necessary at the UNTZ in order to exactly identify the students from UG. Self-identification is not something that should be exclusively relied upon (i.e. a certain number of students did not want to declare themselves as belonging to UG).
4. The participants suggested the purchase of the special IT equipment, particularly related to equipment which has not been already at disposal to students in the mentioned Center, but PCs and other equipment that will be available to students coming from socially and economically disadvantaged families at their respective faculties. Distance learning was also one of the options for that category of students, in which case there is a training need for UNTZ staff and students.
5. Raising awareness on INCLUSION among students at UNTZ, as well as in the community is of immense importance, and a kind of legal support for the promotion of diversities should be provided by the Law itself.

**Action items**

- ✓ Need for a legislative intervention;
- ✓ Raising awareness on social dimension;
- ✓ Purchase of appropriate equipment.

**Partner responsible      Deadline**

**Agenda item:** Visit to the Center for the Support to Students with Special Needs

**Presenter:** Professors from the Center

**Discussion:**

1. According to the information provided by the professors of the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation, there is the Rulebook on the identification of students with special needs (dyslexia), which is the result of the Project realized at UNTZ in 2008. At UNTZ there are 4% of students with dyslexia.
2. The professors have apostrophized the importance of the social dimension, especially the fact that students are getting more and more difficult to access a professor, mostly because professors are overloaded due to the existing normative solutions and therefore have less time for individual work with students.
3. When it comes to the procurement of equipment, it has been pointed out the need for the purchase of those types of equipment for students with special needs that have not been already purchased from other funds for the needs of the Center, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication.
4. The professors pointed out the remarks concerning the INCLUSION project in the sense that the funds foreseen for the realization of the student trips are insufficient. This is particularly emphasized when it comes to students with special needs.
5. A special problem is the inclusion of students coming from financially vulnerable families. Currently, there is no possibility for UNTZ to support this category of students in any way.
6. When it comes to the functioning of the Center for Support to Students with Special Needs, the most difficult circumstance is that student registration is required.

**Conclusions:**

1. The necessity of legal standardization of the obligations and procedures of identification and access to students with special needs has been pointed out. There is a Center for the Support to Students with Special Needs at UNTZ, but its work needs to be "visible" through the work of the Student Service. Information on students with special needs should be confidential.
2. Accordingly, the strategy should also tackle the position of teaching staff in a way that gives teachers more time for individual work with students as well as research.
3. The need to raise awareness of the position of students with special needs at UNTZ was pointed out, and in this sense it is necessary to hold lectures, both for students and for teaching staff.
4. One of the proposals that should be included in the strategy is the possibility of paying school fees in installments. UNTZ is not able to award scholarships, mainly because the UNTZ is a public institution, which is funded from the budget. UNTZ can not by any means influence the criteria for awarding scholarships. The existing normative framework does not permit the establishment of Centers or the recruitment of specially trained staff in existing centers to support students from under-represented groups. The reason for this is the lack of financial resources.
5. It was pointed out the need for the Center as well as UNTZ activities on the INCLUSION project to be accessible for the secondary school students.

Regarding the activities of the Center, the following suggestions are given:

- The center should be open and accessible to students without self-identification;
- It is necessary to strengthen the cooperation of the UNTZ faculties with the Center;
- Each faculty should provide a tutor that would be a link to the Center.

**Action items**

- ✓ Reform of the Law on Higher Education and Normative & Standards
- ✓ Promotion of the Center
- ✓ Raising awareness on social dimension

**Partner responsible**

**Deadline**

**Agenda item:** Meeting with UNTZ students

**Presenter:**

Louise Sperl, J. Alihodžić, students

[Project Name and Number: Development and Integration of Social Dimension Strategies in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina through Cross-Regional Peer-Learning – 574139-EPP-1-2016-1-AM-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP]

**Discussion:**

1. The problem highlighted by students with special needs related to inadequate education, disapproval, and discriminatory attitude of colleagues towards them.
2. According to students, the reasons why certain groups are identified as underrepresented are: unfavorable economic situation, insufficient knowledge of the problem of inclusion, and lack of understanding of a certain number of teaching staff.
3. The students emphasized that issues related to the inclusion of underrepresented groups range from primary and secondary education. Teachers were either giving too much attention to students with special needs or not at all.
4. Students stated that the system of higher education is not adapted to non-traditional students. A student who works to support herself/himself is not able to attend lectures organized during the working hours.
5. Particularly emphasized was the problem of identifying students belonging to underrepresented groups. When enrolling, students were not offered an option to express their attitudes about certain dis(abilities).
6. They also highlighted the problem of non-compliance of exams to students with special needs, as well as the fact that access to certain parts of the buildings was inappropriate for students with physical disabilities.

**Conclusions:**

1. Students recommended introducing a special application form in which students would have been given the opportunity to explain their problem, as they would not have to do it each time before the exam.
2. They all agreed on the necessity of legislative intervention in relation to enhancing cooperation between government and UNTZ in order to improve the status of students from underrepresented groups.

**Action items****Partner responsible      Deadline**

- ✓ Raising awareness on inclusion issues
- ✓ Introducing a special application form for students from UG
- ✓ Legislative intervention in order to improve status of students from UG

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***Other Information***

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**Next steps****Additional information (if any)**

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**Special notes:**

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<b>Follow-up actions for EU experts based on findings and recommendations from the site visit (if any)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider key findings from site visit in the preparation/implementation of the June workshop in Yerevan, targeting HEI and government representatives from partner organisations (with participation of students from PCUs).</li> <li>• Incorporate key findings from the site visit in the final fact finding report on BiH (act. 1.5.; due in July).</li> <li>• Consider key findings for the development of a.) an UNTZ strategy targeting students from underrepresented groups (WP2) and b.) inclusive learning and teaching materials (WP3).</li> </ul>
<b>Follow-up actions for PCUs based on findings and recommendations from the site visit (if any)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness on the Social Dimension of higher education in line with the Bologna Process;</li> <li>• Disseminate information about the INCLUSION project;</li> <li>• Purchase appropriate equipment within the INCLUSION project in line with existing needs of students from underrepresented groups;</li> <li>• Doublecheck with INCLUSION mgmt. budget options for travel costs of persons with disabilities (if required).</li> </ul> <p>Follow up on following suggestions from meeting with teaching staff from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use opportunities to promote the Center for the Support of Students with Special Needs within the scope of the INCLUSION project and explore ways on how to strengthen the cooperation of the UNTZ faculties with the Center.</li> </ul>
<b>Other comments (if any)</b>	
<b>Attachments to report</b>	<p>Agenda for the site visit  Minutes and registration forms from meetings outlined above  PPP from meeting with UNTZ staff  PPP from meeting with UNTZ students</p>
<b>Submitted on</b>	

**A. FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS AT THE PCU:**

**Findings**

**IDENTIFICATION OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

- The results from the PCU and student survey at UNTZ have shown that **the following groups are considered underrepresented at UNTZ:**
  - Students from **economically disadvantaged families including also students without parents** (multiple entries);
  - Students with **disabilities** (multiple entries).

Other groups which were mentioned as underrepresented in higher education at UNTZ:

- Students from **LGBT communities**;
- Students from **Roma communities**;
- Students from **other countries/immigrants**;
- Students who are **employed** (part-time/full-time).

This was also confirmed during meeting discussions.

- **Students with disabilities:** Challenges faced and highlighted by meeting participants relate to inadequate education (e.g. lack of flexible teaching and learning arrangements), disapproval, and discriminatory attitudes of colleagues towards students with disabilities.
- **Students from economically disadvantaged families:** Financial difficulties form a major problem for students in a region with high unemployment (app 54,8%, 67% youth unemployment (Source: [Worldbank](#)). It was therefore also proposed by key stakeholders met during the site visit that students from economically disadvantaged families should be considered as core target group for the INCLUSION project, to be addressed also in the development of a Social Dimension Strategy for UNTZ. Possible entry points could also include the provision of consulting services even though the establishment of new positions will not be possible at this stage.
- **Non-traditional students:** Students stated that the system of higher education is not adapted to non-traditional students – e.g. to those working part-time or full-time. This includes challenges in terms of class attendance and exam dates .
- During discussions, it was also noted that some underrepresented categories may be treated preferential over others (example of students who lost one of their parents during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and got a financial support accordingly).

#### AVAILABLE DATA:

- **Lack of data:** It could be seen both from the survey results as well as from discussions that official data at UNTZ concerning the status and number of students from underrepresented groups are scarce. Some data on specific categories of students from underrepresented groups are available through the enrolment process. This includes information on students who are orphans and whose parents got killed in combat in BiH. Self-identification, however, poses challenges in this context as some students prefer not to identify themselves as a member of such categories. No specific information is required during the enrolment process on disabilities.
- **Special application form for students with disabilities:** In this context, it was proposed that a special application form should be introduced for PWDs at the stage of enrolment, indicating which disability students are facing and which support would be required. It was highlighted that such information would be essential for providing adequate support during studies (e.g. related to exam modalities, teaching etc.) Opposed to other categories of underrepresented groups, self-identification does not seem to be considered problematic in this context.
- According to information provided by professors of the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation, there is the Rulebook on the identification of students with dyslexia which is the result of a project realized at UNTZ in 2008. At UNTZ there are 4% of students with dyslexia.
- Meeting participants also noted that in terms of identifying underrepresented groups, UNTZ should not solely rely on self-identification. Special methods or procedures (enacted by Law) are also considered necessary in this context.

#### RETENTION:



- No information is available why students leave university before the end of the course. In this context, the Dean of the Faculty of Economics has indicated during meetings that she is planning to introduce a short questionnaire for students who wish to leave university prematurely, asking about their reasons for leaving. Inputs may also provide information on whether students from underrepresented groups are more likely to leave university earlier and if so, why.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Students from economically disadvantaged families and students with disabilities** should be considered as **core target group for the INCLUSION project at UNTZ** which should be also considered for the development of the UNTZ Social Dimension Strategy (WP 2).
- **Data on underrepresented groups of students and their needs** are essential and an important precondition for identifying the best possible support measures. The current information acquired from the enrolment process seems insufficient to stakeholders met during the site visit. In this context, it is suggested to introduce new channels for data collection to the extent possible. This may include (but is not limited to) **specific enrolment forms for students with disabilities, questionnaires for students who leave university prematurely** and others.
- **Benchmarking:** In order to periodically take stock of the situation of underrepresented groups of students and progress made in enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education at UNTZ, it is recommended for UNTZ management to regularly (e.g. every 2-3 years) engage in benchmarking. For this purpose, an easy to handle benchmarking tool will be developed within the INCLUSION project (to be discussed at the workshop in Yerevan, June 2017).

## B. FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ROLES AND STRATEGIES OF THE PCU:

### Findings

#### STRATEGY

- It was evident from discussions as well as from the survey that **no strategy is in place so far at UNTZ to implement the Social Dimension of Higher Education in general/provide support to students from underrepresented groups.**
- Meeting participants concluded that it is very important to put questions around the Social Dimension into the **local context** (i.e. underrepresented groups and their challenges might not be the same in BiH and Armenia). **Strategies and measures to be designed within INCLUSION should be therefore tailored to the specific local context of each respective partner university.**
- In relation to a **future strategy** (to be developed within WP2 of the INCLUSION project), participants concluded that the following areas should be addressed/included in such a strategy:
  - **Life-long learning,**
  - **IT-learning**
  - **Accommodation.**
- **Teaching:** During meetings, it was also highlighted that **curricula/resources need to be diverse** and should be (culturally) appropriate regarding underrepresented groups in society



(e.g. portrayal of PWDs, Roma etc.). The diversity of curricula and teaching resources may be also addressed in the future strategy.

- During the site visit, professors also emphasized the high level of teaching obligations on the expense of individual consultations with students and the limited time available to engage in research. A future strategy may also have to explore **opportunities on how to strengthen opportunities for individual consultations with students** (including from underrepresented groups), considering the given regulatory framework.
- It was also highlighted by students, that a future strategy should **clearly outline responsibilities** of key stakeholders.

## ROLES

- Apart from the **Center for Students with Special Needs** at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation (established through a previous TEMPUS project), there is no specific department, institution or focal point tasked to provide support to students from any of the above mentioned underrepresented groups. Even though respondents to the survey seem to be aware of this Center, professors from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation see the need to further strengthen the visibility of the Center and awareness of UNTZ staff and students on the services provided.
- The teaching staff met during the site visit from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation has expressed interest to cooperate with the INCLUSION project. INCLUSION, vice versa, could promote the Center for Students with Special Needs in order to strengthen its visibility.
- In order for the Center to negotiate e.g. specific exam modalities for students with special needs with teaching staff, students need to be registered at the Center with a medical certificate indicating the nature of their disability/special needs. In addition, also informal consultation services are possible.
- Regarding the activities of the Center, the following suggestions were provided by meeting participants:
  - The Center should be open and accessible to students without self-identification;
  - Cooperation of UNTZ faculties with the Center should be strengthened;
  - Each faculty should provide a tutor who should function as a link to the Center.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- For a future Social Dimension Strategy of UNTZ, it is recommended to include the **following topics/areas**:
  - **Life-long learning**;
  - **Distance learning**;
  - **Accommodation**;
  - **Innovative/flexible exam modalities** (e.g. for students with disabilities, non-traditional students);
  - **Diversity of learning and teaching** (e.g. diversity of curricula, resources);
  - **Opportunities for strengthening consultative, mentoring and peer to peer mechanisms**, aiming to provide support to students (including from underrepresented groups);
  - **Flexible funding modalities for students** from economically disadvantaged families (see also under C.);

- **Cooperation with the Center for Support of Students with Special Needs;**
- Furthermore, **responsibilities of key stakeholders need to be clearly defined** and opportunities sought to **institutionally anchor** the Social Dimension at UNTZ to the extent possible (considering the given regulatory frameworks). Overall, it is essential for the UNTZ strategy to **fit the local context**.

**C. Findings/recommendations regarding specific measures to support students from underrepresented groups:**

**Findings**

- **Measures to support students from underrepresented groups:** So far, measures are implemented on **ad hoc basis and largely depend on the commitment and good will of teaching staff** (e.g. special arrangements on exam modalities for PWDs (oral instead of written exams etc.)). As outlined above, the Center for Support of Students with Special Needs can provide support to negotiate special arrangements for students with special needs.
- In the **surveys**, the **following measures were identified** by UNTZ staff and students:
  - **PWDs:** arrangement of special exam modalities, easy physical access to (certain but not all) facilities (elevator, large bathroom on ground floor etc.);
  - Some **(financial) support for single parents, students without parents or students whose parents fought in the war;**
- Overall, both survey respondents and meeting participants noted that there was **not enough support for students from economically disadvantaged families and students from minority groups**. In particular, it was noted that
  - There is **no counselling service** in place for students with financial difficulties (highlighted through several entries in the survey as well as discussions during the site visit);
  - Every institution should have a social worker, psychologist and a support (counselling)team.
- **Scholarships/financial support:** There is no financial support for students of the above identified underrepresented groups, as there are **no scholarships awarded by UNTZ**. Students from economically disadvantaged families are particularly affected from the lack of funding opportunities. On the other side, there are **scholarships mostly by Ministries of Tuzla Canton (mix of merit and needs based system)**. Preference is given to students whose parent(s) got killed in combat in BiH. In addition, **some NGO s provide financial support** to students who belong to **minority groups** (i.e. Roma students).
- Meeting participants proposed that when developing the UNTZ Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education, **possibilities should be explored for paying school fees in instalments**.
- In relation to **students with special needs** (audio or visual impairments, dyslexia, dyscalculia, or other forms of physical or mental impairment) there are no **specially adapted forms of exams or tests** systematically arranged in order to facilitate the educational process for these categories of students. As outlined above, some teachers are taking measures in this respect on an ad hoc/individual basis. During discussions with students it was also mentioned that a **special assistant/tutor** would be very helpful for some students with disabilities during exams. According to UNTZ staff/students, **physical access** to certain parts of the buildings is considered inappropriate for students with physical disabilities.

- **Special IT equipment for the INCLUSION project:** Meeting participants suggested to purchase equipment which is not already available to students at the Center for Students with Special Needs in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. It was further recommended, that PCs and other equipment should be available to students coming from socially and economically disadvantaged families at their respective faculties.
- **Need to address also lower levels of education:** Meeting participants highlighted that there is a need to address also lower levels of education, when it comes to underrepresented groups and their access/participation in higher education. Some activities take place in this respect already and will be continued in future (promotional events of UNTZ at high schools). This will be also an important entry point for WP4 of the INCLUSION project.
- Meeting participants also agreed on the necessity of a legislative intervention to further **enhance cooperation between government and UNTZ with the aim to improve the status of students from underrepresented groups.**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Explore opportunities to **introduce consultative mechanisms for students** (within the given regulatory framework of UNTZ which does not allow the establishment of new positions);
- Explore opportunities to introduce other measures such as **mentoring programmes or peer to peer support** from/for students from underrepresented groups;
- Explore opportunities to **systematically arrange exam modalities that fit the needs of students with disabilities;**
- Explore opportunities within and beyond INCLUSION to **strengthen capacities of teaching staff for working with students from underrepresented groups** (see also under D.).
- Explore opportunities for students from economically disadvantaged families to pay **school fees in instalments;**
- Purchase **IT equipment** within INCLUSION that is **in line with identified needs of underrepresented groups of students;**
- **Continue efforts to promote higher education at high schools.**

#### D. Findings/recommendations regarding capacity building/training needs:

##### Findings

- So far, **training opportunities of UNTZ staff to support students from underrepresented groups are very limited.** Some trainings took place within previous Tempus projects (e.g. to enhance support for students with special needs).
- The following **capacity building needs** have been identified in the PCU and student surveys from UNTZ and/or discussions during the site visit:
  - **Awareness raising of teaching staff/mgmt. on needs of students from underrepresented groups.**
  - **Inclusive teaching, tutoring and mentoring** for students from underrepresented groups.
  - **Teaching methods for students with disabilities;**
  - Teaching staff to learn **how to use IT equipment for students with disabilities;**

- **Distance/IT learning** as possible means to enhance access to higher education for students from rural areas/economically disadvantaged backgrounds: In this context it was however noted, that access to IT equipment is a major challenge.

Overall, it was noted that special attention should be devoted to **enhance capacities of UNTZ staff to address the needs of students with disabilities and students belonging to economically disadvantaged families.**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Consider the above outlined topics for future trainings of UNTZ staff within and beyond INCLUSION.

#### **E. Other points raised**

In addition to the points mentioned above, the following recommendations/findings were made:

- **Raising awareness on INCLUSION and the Social Dimension of higher education among students at UNTZ**, as well as in the **community** is considered absolutely essential;
- Students also recommended for the INCLUSION focal points at UNTZ/UNTZ staff in general to **liaise with CSOs promoting the needs of specific underrepresented groups. As some CSOs do provide financial support to students from minority groups (e.g. Roma students), this would be also very useful for disseminating information about possible funding opportunities among UNTZ students.**
- Teaching staff pointed out that **the funds foreseen for the realization of the student trips within INCLUSION are considered very tight.** This was particularly emphasized when it comes to students with special needs who may require additional assistance.
- For the future, students also proposed to have **mixed meetings together with teaching staff.**















